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SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN UNION

Syria's President Quwatli is scheduled to arrive in Cairo on 1 February to join Nasir in announcing the Egyptian-Syrian union.

A last-minute postponement is possible.

A. Nasir still seems reluctant to become involved in the confused Syrian picture; and

B. He is also worried by reports that Soviet representatives in Damascus have privately opposed the union. They have suggested that it might require reconsideration of the Soviet-Syrian arms and economic agreements.

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- II. Under the arrangement for the union, Nasir would be dominant. His terms are harsh and he stipulates that:
- A. The Syrian army be taken out of politics;
 - B. Syrian political parties be dissolved;
 - C. Communists and "corrupt" conservative elements be suppressed; and
 - D. He will control all key appointments.
- III. Nasir's objective is to maintain Egyptian influence in Syria and ward off a possible Communist take-over.
- IV. The basic Syrian drive for union with Egypt springs out of Pan-Arab nationalism, but the present insistence in Syria for union results from army fears that pro-Soviet and Communist elements might seize control in the near future.

V. While general agreement has been reached, there are many unsolved problems, and at best the consummation of the union will be a long and tortuous process.

- A. The state would be physically split by Israel.
- B. The problem of finding jobs for Syrian officers in the united army is a very touchy one.
- C. The economic obstacles to union are considerable.
- D. Politicians, especially in Syria, are fearful that the union will submerge them.

VI. The people of the Arab world, inspired by Pan-Arab nationalism, tend to view the proposed union as the first step in the development of the long-sought goal of Arab unity.

VII. Official reactions in the area are reserved or apprehensive:

A. In Jordan the government will be subject to great pressure to take steps toward a union with Syria...this pressure will include anti-government actions.

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C. Israel will view Egyptian-Syrian union with strong disfavor. because it will mean a more unified Arab world on its borders.

However, initially it too will be cautious in its public utterances.

VIII. The Syrian Communists are unhappy with the Union but are backing it because to do otherwise would risk unpopularity and permanent damage.

IX. Officially and publicly the USSR has been non-committal on the proposed union. It poses the USSR serious problems. While it may continue its non-committal position, developments may induce it eventually to issue statements in formal support of the union. At the same time, the USSR is likely to continue behind-the-scenes opposition to the union effort.